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Books in the News

Mysterious Agency Retains Obscurity

THE REAL CIA. By Lyman B. Kirkpatrick Jr., 312 pp. Macmillan. \$6.95.

By AUBREY THRELKELD

The author worked for the Central Intelligence Agency for 18 years, the last three as executive director. That makes this an insider's report on this mysterious agency, but no reader should expect to get very far inside. For Mr. Kirkpatrick remains a loyal "alumnus," well conditioned to not telling too much.

But his having been in the inner circle gives this book some special interest. He does

offer comment on both the strengths and weaknesses of the CIA—the jacket blurb promises, but on the whole strengths predominate. He seeks to straighten out the mixture of "fact and fancy, gossip and slander, malice and truth" which he says the press prints about the agency.

Stirs Jealousy

Naturally, Mr. Kirkpatrick rejects charges that the CIA makes foreign-policy decisions, but he agrees it influences those decisions with the information it gathers and interprets. This leads to some of the CIA's difficulties. Frequent reliance of ambassadors, for instance, on the knowledge of CIA men arouses jealousy of foreign service officers.

Also, the author notes, while the CIA's "successes have been many," its "failures have been public," like the Bay of Pigs "invasion," where Mr. Kirkpatrick finds cause to criticize the agency.

Political Action

He passes rather quickly over political action, even though he calls it the area in which "the greatest concern exists about the CIA . . . and wherein the public reaction is largely unfavorable." This is undercover work against an enemy, the attempt to manipulate events in America's favor, that Secretary of State Rusk has called "back-alley fighting."

Mr. Kirkpatrick feels, however, that there is little question the United States needs the capability for such action, and that the CIA—rather than the State or Defense Department—is the agency to conduct it. But he would use this capability "only in the most serious national emergency, and as a last resort before the use of military power." And even then he would have the CIA act only at the direction of the policy level of government.

Author's Activities

Much of this book is autobiographical. Seventy-two pages, for instance, are spent on Mr. Kirkpatrick's pre-CIA career, though this did involve intelligence work before there was a CIA. We are led through assorted administrative details, generalities and occasional observations on world questions.

But so long as the reader does not look for the revelations implied in the title, he will find this a reasonably good analysis of the CIA. Mr. Kirkpatrick is now a professor of political science at Brown University.